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Instability
Report)

THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

Senior Review Panel

4 February 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Political
Instability Branch, IIC/OGI

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SUBJECT: Comments on Quarterly

1. First, the Quarterly seems to me to be a useful document. I'm not certain at what audience it is aimed, but I can envisage that governmental officials in a wide variety of positions would find it useful.

2. Assuming some important officials need to absorb the information it provides, I would criticize the chart, "Status of Key Indicators," in Part 1. In my experience these kinds of multicolored, keyed, coded, and concentrated information transferring devices are counterproductive. To someone confronted with these displays every third month, the task of understanding the legend, being able to line up the ordinate and abscissa, carry forward the heading, and interpret the line shadings is simply too much of a mental exercise. The chart contains too much information, and it ends up being interesting only to the hard-working staff officer who labors over it so lovingly. I suggest the information be portrayed in smaller packages, with less specificity in Part 1, with refinements relegated to Part 3 for the benefit of the true aficionados.

3. What is it the top brass is interested in?

a. Items classified as "substantial concern" which reflect an increase since the last report (the bad news).

b. Items reflecting decreased concern since the last report (the good news).

The rest is "no news" to a busy policymaker.



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4. In the Selected Political and Economic Indicators/ Developments and Trends by country, I found no legend for the color coding on the significance of the symbols. How people absorb information from charts is a very subjective matter, but I am quite certain the simplest chart is a running line graph.

5. The explanatory paragraphs on each country seem to me to be excellent. A short summary can be dangerous, and I would hope the text in Part 2 fully supports the short statement.

6. In Part 2, I would suggest that each country contained in the chart in Part 1 should be covered. No country, once on the list, should be dropped until a year or so after it seems to have settled down. The coverage may be brief, but at least it disciplines the group which works the report to be prudent in their judgments and to review the situation quarterly.

7. The report does impress me as high class staff work.

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